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THE ARYAN WORDS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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I.

ALL Hebrew scholars are aware that in the Hebrew and Aramaic Masoretic text of the Old Testament there are a number of words which have for ages puzzled translators, commentators, and lexicographers. In some instances the meaning of such words had been lost before the Septuagint version was made, and consequently the authors of that translation had either to content themselves with transliterating the original vocables or to make a more or less accurate guess at their signification. Somewhat of the same system was adopted in later versions. Ancient and Mediæval Jewish commentators, even the greatest of them, often show, by their vain attempts to discover a Semitic etymology for such words, how difficult they found the matter. Even when we turn to the Hebrew Lexicon of Drs. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, the very latest effort of Hebrew-Aramaic scholarship in that direction, we find that, vast as is the fund of erudition to be discovered in that volume, yet many of these problems are there admitted to be still unsolved.

It may seem rash to make another attempt when so many have failed. Yet it is evident that the matter is of such great interest and importance that it ought not to be left in its present unsatisfactory condition. Even a partial solution of the problem, leaving aside for the present

all Egyptian, Accadian, and Assyro-Babylonian words, and dealing merely with those which are now supposed to be of Āryan origin, may not be altogether devoid of value. If we succeed in discovering the correct etymology of such words, this may be valuable as throwing light upon questions of the date, authenticity, and authorship of the books in which they occur. At present, however, we leave all this aside and confine ourselves to a strictly philological investigation in the Articles on the subject which, through the courtesy of the Editors, are permitted to appear in this REVIEW.

It is hardly necessary to say that it is with the utmost diffidence that the writer ventures to invite scholars to consider and to criticise his suggestions. With our present progress in philology and in knowledge of the ancient Āryan as well as of the Semitic tongues, it ought to be possible to ascertain definitely the derivation and meaning of all, or almost all, the words of Āryan origin which occur in the Sacred Text.

We begin by quoting Dr. Driver's comment upon certain of these words which occur in Daniel and Ezra, in order to show how very necessary is such an inquiry as that upon which we are embarking.

In his note on Dan. 3, 2, נִדְבָר , *gēdābar*, in "The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges," he says: "An uncertain word. It *may* be a textual corruption, or a faulty pronunciation, of *gizbār*, 'treasurer' (Pehlevi *ganza-var*, Persian *ganjvar*), which is found in Ezr. 1, 8; 7, 21; it *may* have arisen by dittography from the following דִּתְבָּר *dethābar*; it *may* be an error for *haddābar* (in the plural נִדְבָרִיא for הִדְבָּרִיא), the word which occurs in vv. 24, 27; 4, 36; 6, 7 (see on v. 24).¹

¹ *Op. cit.*, 37.

Let us now see whether further study will throw any light upon the derivation and meaning of *g^edābar*², and relieve us of being obliged to conjecture an error in the text, which is perhaps hardly a satisfactory thing to do whenever a word puzzles us.

In Avestic Persian we find the word *gadhā*, 'a club or mace.' In Sanskrit it occurs in two forms, *gada* and *gadā* with the same meaning. It is not found in the few Achæmenian Persian inscriptions known to us, but it would doubtless be *gadā* in that dialect. The termination *-bar* means 'bearer' and occurs in almost innumerable words in ancient and modern Persian, as does its equivalent *-φορος* in Greek. The whole word is therefore *gadābar* (or *gadhābar*), and it means 'mace-bearer.' In Sanskrit *gadā-bhrit* with the same signification occurs as a title of Krishna, just as its equivalent *claviger* does in Latin as applied to Hercules. The habit of including 'mace-bearers' among the officials in the train of kings and princes still exists in the East. In modern Persia the 'mace-bearer' is now styled *chūb-dār*, and he "carries a long staff with a large head covered with embossed silver." In India among the attendants of princes are still found 'mace-bearers' (in Urdū termed *sonṭe-bar-dār*). It is not entirely unknown in England to have such officials in the retinue of our Lord Mayors. That in Ancient Persia the 'mace-bearer' existed is known from classical writers. For instance, Xenophon mentions the high position of the *σκηπτούχος* at the Persian Court (*Cyropædia* VII, 3, 16; VIII, 1, 38; 3, 15). Tacitus (*Ann.* VI, 33) tells us the same of other Eastern courts. It is still more likely that the office

² We follow Canon Driver's system of neglecting all notice of *daghesh lené's* presence or absence in variable medial letters like *b*, *k*, etc. This is necessary in comparing Assyrian and Āryan words with Heb. and Aram.

existed in Babylon, where Herodotus (I, 195) informs us that every Babylonian man carried a staff (*σκηπτρον*) with an ornate top. Hence both the derivation and the meaning of the word *gēdābar* seem clear.

Gizbār (גִּזְבָּר), which should doubtless be punctuated *gazzābar* (גַּזְזָבָר), is quite a different word and denotes, as has long been known, a 'treasurer.' The first part of the word is the old Persian *ganza*, 'treasure,' which in Greek assumed the form *γάζα*, thence being borrowed into Latin (*gaze*). In the biblical form of the word also, as shown above, the nasal is assimilated, as is usual in such cases. In Assyrian (Muss-Arnolt, I, 227) both *gunzu* and *ganzu* occur, doubtless borrowed from the Persian, and elsewhere in the Inscriptions we find *ganzabaru*, for what in Achæmenian Persian must have been *ganzābara*. This is evidently the original of the Aramaic *gizbār* (*gazzābar*). In Modern Persian the word is *ganjvar*. In this whole class of words it may be noticed that the ending *bar*, *bār*, *var* or *vār* (for it assumes all these forms) is the Sanskrit *bhar* (Greek -*φορ-ος*), so that the forms in *b* are older than those in *v*. The older form is also retained in English ('to bear') and Danish ('bare'), cf. *φέρω*, *fer-o*.

The third word of our group is *הַדְּבָר*, *haddābar*, which the Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon renders 'counsellor, minister,' adding that it is a "Persian loan-word: original form and meaning dubious." Of course, the meaning of the final syllable is that which has just been explained in the preceding paragraph. Possibly the word should be *הַדְּבָר*, *ḥaddābar*, not *haddābar*. If so, both meaning and derivation are quite clear. In Avestic Persian and in Sanskrit there is the root *khad*,³ 'to strike,

³ The *kh* of the Persian has not the same sound as *kh* in Sanskrit; but etymologically they correspond with one another.

to kill.' In Armenian, a cognate Āryan tongue, we have *khad*, 'a two-edged sword,' from this root. Another cognate root in Sanskrit is *khad* or *khand*, with a cerebral *d*, 'to divide.' From this comes the Sanskrit *khad-ga*, 'a sword,' whence the title *khadga-grāhin* or "sword-grasper," appellation of a particular dignitary. Hence the biblical word should be written חַדָּבָר, *hadābar*, and would in Achæmenian Persian represent *khadābara*, meaning 'sword-bearer.' But the Masoretic text may be correct with this meaning just as it stands, omitting the *dāghēsh forte* in the ד. For in Avestic we find not only *khad* but also the softer *had*, both meaning 'to strike.'

A careful study of these three words (נוֹכַר, נִרְכַּר, and הִרְכַּר), therefore, instead of leading us to confound them with one another and to blame some unknown and ignorant copyist for blundering in transcription, proves that the text is correct, and enables us to fix both the etymology and the meaning of each.